

OPERAS FOR OCTOBER 2026

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Stories of the Operas

The Voyevoda, Op. 3, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Note: A "Voyevoda" is a regional Governor or Ruler. They are often noblemen but not necessarily so. They are also elected by the people in some areas. Voivode is an alternative spelling. It derives from Old Slavic, literally meaning "warlord" and is a Slavic title that originally denoted the principal commander of a military force (warlord). The word gradually came to denote the governor of a province.

The territory ruled or administered by a voivode is known as a voivodeship. In the English language, the title is often translated as "prince" or "duke". In Slavic terminology, the rank of a voivode is considered equal of that of a German Herzog. A Boyar is a "Baron" or high member of the aristocracy. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boyar>

In modern Poland, a voivode (wojewoda), appointed by the central government in Warsaw, is the governor of a voivodeship. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voivode>

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's first opera, was composed to the plot of the comedy "A Dream on the Volga, Scenes from Popular Life"; of the 17th Century, by Alexandr Ostrovsky who offered it to the composer. The playwright planned to write the libretto himself. In 1867, Tchaikovsky started his work on the opera, however, because of some other business and creative disagreement with Ostrovsky, their collaboration stopped after writing the first act and the first scene of the second act. Tchaikovsky had to finish the libretto on his own. It all slightly impeded the process of writing. The composer had cooled off on the plot. "The plot is good for nothing, that is it lacks any dramatic interest and flow," he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck. Tchaikovsky resumed his work in late October of 1867 at the urging of the singer Alexandra Menshikova, the performer of the role of Marya Vlashevna who planned to showcase the opera at her benefit. In July of 1868, the opera was completed. It was premiered on 30th October, 1869, at the Bolshoi Theatre and was very well received by the audience. The composer was awarded a laurel wreath and had to take a bow many times. Vladimir Odoyevsky, a Russian writer, musicologist and music theorist, said "Russian tonality reigns. But gifted Tchaikovsky also did not resist the desire to please the public. This opera guarantees a great future for Tchaikovsky."

The opera was performed five times and never revived. In the early 1870s, Tchaikovsky destroyed the score and partly used the musical material of the opera in his other works. During the Soviet period The Voyevoda was reconstructed from surviving manuscripts.

Characters and Performers:

Nechay Shalygin, the Voyevoda -	V. Matorin (bass)
Vlas Dyuzhoy, a wealthy merchant -	L. Zimnenko (bass)
Nastasya, his wife -	A. Fatkina (soprano)
Their daughters: Marya Vlashevna -	G. Kuznetsova (soprano)
Praskovya Vlashevna -	L. Bondarenko (soprano)

Stepan Bastryukov -	A. Mishchevsky (tenor)
Roman Dubrovin, a fugitive tradesman -	O. Klyonov (baritone)
Olyona, his wife -	Y. Abakumovskaya (mezzo-soprano)
Rezviy, Bastryukov's servant -	V. Svistov (bass)
Jester -	V. Voynarovsky (tenor)
Nedviga, a nurse -	N. Isakova (mezzo-soprano)
New Voyevoda -	V. Svistov (bass)

Synopsis

Act I: Scene 1: Boyar Stepan Bastryukov tiptoes his way to the garden near merchant Dyuzhoy's house to keep an appointment with his daughter Marya Vlashevna. He is alarmed with the news that Dyuzhoy is going to marry his elder daughter Praskovya to his worst enemy, the Voyevoda Nechay Shalygin who ruined Bastryukov's family.

During the lovers' date, the Voyevoda suddenly appears. Amazed with the beauty of Marya Vlashevna, he refuses the elder daughter in favour of the younger one. Marya is taken to the house and is prepared to be given in marriage to the Voyevoda. However, Shalygin stands on their way. After an unequal fight with the Voyevoda's guards, Bastryukov's servants have to retreat. The boyar gives a firm promise to return the bride and leaves the hated house.

Act 2: Scene 1: Bastryukov's house. The boyar is anxious about his bride throughout the day and night. He finds support in a fellow sufferer, fugitive tradesman Roman Dubrovin. The Voyevoda ruined his life too and led his wife Olyona from him. Roman suggests that Bastryukov abducts the girls in the morning when Shalygin and his servants go to the church. The plan is accepted.

Scene 2: The Voyevoda's house. Dancing serving girls cannot entertain sad Marya Vlashevna. When she is left alone, Olyona, Dubrovin's wife, appears to tell her of the plotted escape.

Act 3: Under cover of the night, both couples prepare themselves for escape. Their happy date is interrupted by the angry Voyevoda who commands the delinquent ones to be tied up and he takes Marya Vlashevna back to the house by force. The people indignant with the Voyevoda's tyranny fill the yard. The crowd set the captives free.

The old boyar Bastryukov informs the people who are ready to deal shortly with Shalygin that he has been stripped of his rank. The father gives his blessing to the young ones to the cheers of the crowd.

The Demon by Anton Rubinstein was once a mainstay of the repertoire and a great favourite with the bass Feodor Chaliapin, it survives today only in Russia and in occasional festival performances. The performance tonight was recorded in Wexford Ireland in 1994.

The setting of the 'Demon' is somewhere between heaven, hell and earth – just as the demon himself is a fallen angel, an inwardly torn character, a negating power and an adversary of the angel at the same time. The Demon, unable to love and still be humble falls in love with Tamara, who is about to marry Prince Sinodal

For the purposes of the opera, the setting is Georgia, during the time of the Tartar raids

Roles.

Prince Gudal	Leonid Zimnenko
Tamara, his daughter	Marina Mescheriakova
Prince Sinodal, Tamara's fiancé	Valery Serkin

The Demon	Anatoly Lochak
Angel	Alison Browner
Tamara's Nurse	Ludmilla Andrew
An old servant of the Prince Sinodal	Richard Robson
Messenger of the Prince Sinodal	Wjacheslav Weinorowski

The Wexford Festival Opera Chorus and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland are conducted by Alexander Anissimov.

Act 1: Prologue. The Demon appears in Prince Gudal's castle in Georgia and expresses his complete disillusionment with life. The Angel then appears and reminds the Demon that love can restore him to heaven. The Demon rejects that idea and says that he desires wild passions and struggle. The Angel warns him not to touch anything dear to heaven. The Demon tells the Angel that he looks forward to their struggle.

Scene 2: Tamara, the daughter of Prince Gudal arrives on the river bank with her old nurse and joins the girls there who are filling pitchers with water. The Demon appears to Tamara and is smitten by her beauty but Tamara is deeply disturbed and hurries back to the protection of the castle.

Scene 3: The Demon visits Prince Sinodal and his men who are en route to Prince Gudal so that he can marry Tamara and with the assistance of a gang of Tartars, kills the bridegroom.

Act 2: Scene 1: Is set in the hall of Prince Gudal's castle and all is ready for the wedding. A messenger arrives saying that Prince Sinodal is camping overnight and will arrive the next day. Suddenly, there is a further commotion and word arrives that the Prince and all his men have been killed. Tamara collapses sobbing and then hears the honeyed words of the Demon. He says that she should not be concerned by earthly things but as soon as night falls, he will come to her. Tamara is very confused and begs her father to allow her to enter a convent. Reluctantly her father agrees.

Scene 2: The Demon approaches the convent where the only light is that coming from Tamara's cell. He is fearful of entering and regrets his immortality and realises that he wants to marry Tamara and by accepting earthly love, will find his way back to heaven. Then the Angel appears and bars his way.

Scene 3: The Demon appears in Tamara's cell and says that he has found all that he sought before he was cast out of heaven. He says that he will renounce evil and pictures their future as eternity and boundless power. Tamara struggles with her fear of God and eternal damnation but eventually succumbs and is killed when he kisses her. There is an epilogue where the Angel appears to struggle for Tamara's soul: the Demon says 'I cannot give her back, she is mine' but the angel responds by saying that she was not created for the Demon and banishes him.

Once again, the Demon is left alone, nothing has really changed: he carries on living in eternal damnation and loses his hope in the shape of Tamara, with whom he shared his solitude, his longing for love, his thirst for knowledge and the sadness resulting from it all.

Goodbye, Mr. Chips is an opera with music and libretto by Gordon Getty (b. 1933), based on the 1934 novel by James Hilton. The opera concerns Arthur Chipping ("Chips"), a beloved schoolmaster at the fictional Brookfield all-boys English boarding school, spanning his decades-long tenure from 1870 through World War I. The premiere was scheduled in July 2020, but the COVID pandemic resulted in it being filmed in 2021 instead.

Cast:

Merrivale	Lester Lynch, baritone
Chips	Nathan Granner, tenor
Kathie	Melody Moore, soprano
Faulkner	Michael Jankosky, tenor
West	Bruce Rameker, baritone
Ralston	Kevin Short, bass-baritone
Rivers	Kevin Short, bass-baritone
Grayson	Kevin Forth, baritone
Maynard	Samuel Fauftine, tenor
Linford	Melody Moore, soprano

Synopsis:

Act 1: We hear children singing “Alma Mater” and Merrivale tells how Mr. Chipping (or “Chips”) became a legend over 48 years of teaching Latin at Brookfield, an English boarding school for boys. We first see Chips, now 85 and retired, with Merrivale, his doctor, in Chips’ drawing room across the street from Brookfield. It is 1933 and Chips tells Merrivale how he had met Kathie, a girl with golden hair, on vacation in the Lake District in 1896. They had married within weeks. We see them on the eve of their wedding and then celebrating in Brookfield as they expect their first child. But she dies in childbirth and the baby is stillborn. The doctors had warned of complications. We see her farewell to Chips at the hospital, her last words being “I will save a place for you, if I am sent the right way, and keep an eye on you, if their telescopes are strong enough, and put in a word for you, if I can find the right ear, because I love you forever. Goodbye, Mr. Chips.”

Chips wears the same old academic gown for years because Kathie had stitched it once. He slips more humour into his lectures to help the boys understand and remember, just as Kathie had thought he should. We see his kindly reaction when one student, Faulkner, plays a prank on him. We see him reprimand another, West, for fighting. The normal penalty is expulsion. Chips puts the fear of God into West but lets him off with probation and 200 lines. Alone, Chips says, “The head would rusticate him if he knew. But West has good stuff in him. Kathie, I think this is what you would have done.”

Headmaster Meldrum dies. Chips becomes acting head and delivers the eulogy. The new headmaster, Ralston, a stern authoritarian, faults Chips for his tattered gown and old-fashioned Latin pronunciation. He demands that Chips retire. Chips is angered but amused and declines with wit and grace. “I don’t intend to retire,” he says, “and you can do what you like about it.” The whole school learns and backs Chips. The chairman of the board of governors, Sir John Rivers, tells him, “You can stay here until you’re a hundred, if you feel like it. Indeed, it’s our hope that you will.”

Act 2: Ralston has moved on. The young new head, Charteris, is a decent sort who lets Chips carry on as before. We see Chips hosting the boys the night before they leave for Christmas holidays. Later he consoles one of them, Grayson, when his father was thought lost on the Titanic. Alone, Chips prays: “Kathie, if you can find the right ear, please put in a word for Grayson’s father.” Grayson soon runs in, overjoyed that his father has been found safe.

Chips retires at 65 and speaks at a dinner in his honour. He tells anecdotes, some humorous and some touching, of his long teaching career. He adds, “But chiefly, I remember all your faces. I have thousands in my mind.” Charteris leaves to serve in World War I. Chips is

invited back to fill in once more as acting head. We see him reading the list of alumni who have died that week. Sirens interrupt him as German airplanes are attacking nearby military bases. Chips resumes as if nothing were amiss and arranges for one boy, Maynard, to find a quote from Caesar that ends the scene in laughter.

We return to Chips' drawing room in 1933, soon after Merrivale has left. Ralston calls in and begs Chips' pardon and advice. He says, "Tomorrow I will be arrested for grand larceny. I will plead guilty and serve twelve years in prison. Is there a God, Mr. Chipping?" Chips answers, "there is." He asks for a favour. He has applied to Brookfield on behalf of his grandson and is worried about scandal. Chips promises to help.

Chips is then visited by Linford, a new student. As he leaves, he says, "Goodbye, Mr. Chips!" Alone, Chips says "Mr. Chips! Just like dear Kathie!" He nods off and slumps to the floor. He wakes in hospital with Merrivale, Rivers, Chatteris and Maynard standing by. Chips tells Rivers of his promise to Ralston. "Scandal be damned," says Rivers, "the boy will be admitted." He muses "pity that he never had any children." Students outside are heard singing "Alma Mater." Chips wakes and says, "I heard you say that I never had any children. Oh, but I have, thousands of 'em!" He calls their names, including Faulkner, Grayson and West. "My last joke, Kathie did it make you laugh?" and dies.

The Opricnik: [The Guardsman] P I Tchaikovsky

Premiered in 1874 at the Mariinsky theatre in Saint Petersburg, this opera was Tchaikovsky's first public triumph. It was then taken up by Kiev, Odessa and Moscow but Tchaikovsky increasingly came to dislike it and tried to ward off revivals by saying that he intended to revise it although he had no intention of doing so. Some of the music appeared earlier in his first unsuccessful opera, the *Voyevoda*.

Roles

Prince Zemchuznyj	Bass	Vassily Savenko
Natal'ja	Soprano	Elena Lassoskaya
Molchan Mit'kov	Bass	Dmitri Ulianov
Bojarina Morozova	Mezzo soprano	Irina Doljenko
Andrej Morozov	Tenor	Vsevolod Grivnov
Basmanov	Alto	Alexandra Durseneva
Prince Vjaz'minsky	Baritone	Vladimir Ogovenko
Zachar'evna	Soprano	Cinzia De Mola

Orchestra & Chorus of Teatro Lirico Cagliari Conductor Gennadi Rozhdestvensky

Act 1: Prince Zemchuznyj's garden, at nightfall.

Zemchuznyj, the boyard, receives the visit of Molchan Mit'kov, who has come to ask for the hand of his beautiful daughter Natal'ja. The prince accepts, in spite of the suitor's age, but warns him: the girl won't have any dowry.

Enter Natal'ja, accompanied by a procession of handmaids and by Zachar'evna, the nurse. The young princess is listless and bored of the monotonous life she leads in the country, the high rooms of the noble residence assigned to the women; displeased with the song intoned by her friends, she suggests another, melancholy song, telling the story of a girl died of grief because she was forced to marry an old man. Then, at the nurses' reproaches, she asks her to tell them a love story. Playfully, the girls run off, scattering among the bushes,

Andrej Morozov, his friend Basmanov and a group of Oprichniks (Ivan the Terrible's praetorian guards) arrive. Andrej has come to see his beloved Natal'ja, who is secretly engaged to him, and Basmanov and the guards want to help him fulfil his dream. Left alone with Basmanov, the young man reveals to his friend that he thinks of joining the Oprichniks to obtain by the Czar, justice for the wrongs he suffered in the past. Zemchuznyj, in fact, killed his father and pillaged his family's properties, reducing them to poverty. Basmanov exhorts him not to waste any time and go to his mother in order to get her blessing for the enlistment. Before Andrej leaves, he gives him some money to help him out. Natal'ja, hidden behind the bushes, has overheard their dialogue; distressed, she invokes her beloved, while her nurse and handmaids try to entertain her with some dances.

Act 2: First tableau. A farmer's hut.

Princess Morozova, Andrej's mother, sadly recollects the wrongs she suffered from the wicked Zemchuznyj. But she is willing to accept her sad lot, bearing her suffering in silence and forgetting the proud life she led as the wife of the wealthy Prince Morozov, so long as God will protect her son. Enter Andrej, who exhorts her to forget the past and gives her a purse full of money, a sign that things have taken a turn for the best; it is a gift from Basmanov, the Czar's favourite. Morozova is horrified at the sight of the money and warns her son against getting close to Basmanov, for - she says - the terrible sovereign's steward is made of the same stuff as the Czar. Andrej reassures her and reveals that the money had been entrusted to the steward by his father when they were comrades-in-arms. The princess desperately tries to dissuade him again, but all she can do is beg him not to stain his father's honour and give him her blessing.

Second tableau. The Czar's quarters in the town of Aleksandrovsij.

Around a sumptuously laid table the Oprichniks are singing the Czar's praises when prince Vjaz'minskij comes to interrupt their revelry, lest they disturb the sovereign's rest. Basmanov announces that the Czar has accepted Andrej Morozov's request to enter the Praetorian corps. Vjaz'minskij is furious; he can't accept the son of his fierce enemy to become one of them. Basmanov tries to quench his anger by reminding him that a father's faults should not be on a son's head and that they cannot disobey a royal order; then he leaves to fetch Morozov, while Vjaz'minskij secretly hopes for revenge. In front of the Praetorians, Andrej must take the oath: he must swear to be loyal to the Czar, attend no other duty than the service of his sovereign and forget his blood-ties and his love. The young man proclaims that he is ready, but when Vjaz'minskij reminds him of the terrible punishment that would befall him in case of treachery; he hesitates at the thought of leaving his beloved and denying his mother and father. He has no choice, however: either he joins the Praetorians or he won't have any chance to redeem the wrongs his family suffered. To back out now, moreover, would mean death: urged by Basmanov, Andrej swears.

Act 3: A square in Moscow.

The people of Moscow give vent to their despair for having lost the Czar's loving guidance: the sovereign, in fact, has moved away from the city. Morozova, suffering from loneliness and fearing for her son's destiny, decides to go and pray in the nearby church; as she walks towards it, a group of boys insult her -while people chase them away, Natal'ja arrives at a run and throws herself into her arms. The girl has fled from her father's home, where she was kept like a captive awaiting the forced wedding, and is looking for her help and protection. The woman warns her: it is useless and dangerous to struggle against her powerful, wealthy

and determined father. But Natal'ja is prepared to die: life without Andrej would be meaningless. Enter Zemchuznyj, accompanied by his retinue. The girl throws herself at her father's feet, begging for mercy, but at the mention of Andrej's name he reacts harshly and even Morozova's attempts to make him change his mind are all in vain. While Natal'ja is being seized by Zemchuznyj's servants, Basmanov and Andrej arrive with some Praetorians. Morozova immediately realises that her son has joined the Oprichniks. Aware that he is in danger, Basmanov wants to drag Andrej away, but he refuses to go and tries to explain to his mother that he has become a Praetorian for a noble purpose, to gain money and avenge his father. All in vain: Morozova curses her son and falls to the ground, crushed by grief. Basmanov convinces Andrej that the only way he can regain his mother's blessing is to ask the Czar to release him from the oath. So they gallop away towards the royal palace, hoping for the Czar's mercy.

Act 4: The Czar's quarters in the town of Aleksandrovskij.

Natal'ja and Andrej's wedding banquet is under way. Morozov is happy because his request to be released from the oath has been granted and he was able to marry his Natal'ja, rescuing her from Zemchuznyj's clutches. But it grieves him to know that he must leave the Praetorians, his friends, for he would have wanted to serve his sovereign loyally; then he reaffirms his devotion to the Czar and proclaims that he is ready to defend him always and everywhere. Basmanov reminds him that till the end of the banquet, until midnight, he is still an Oprichnik, owing total obedience to the Czar. Andrej drinks light-heartedly to the Czar's health, but Natal'ja is troubled, she has an unpleasant presentiment and is impatiently awaiting the end of the party. Suddenly a very upset Basmanov arrives and warns Andrej that he is in great danger because of his senseless behaviour. The young man, however, does not seem conscious of the risks he is running. Enter Prince Vjaz'minskij, who announces that the Czar wants to see Andrej's beautiful bride. At first Morozov is proud of such a request, but when he learns that Natal'ja must go alone, he refuses to let her leave without him. The Oprichniks remind him that he must obey or he will infringe the oath that binds him till midnight, while Basmanov tries to convince him that this is nothing but an innocent prank. Vjaz'minskij secretly rejoices, feeling that his revenge is near. Natal'ja and Andrej stand firm in their decision: they prefer to face death than obey. While the girl falls unconscious and is dragged away by the Praetorians, Andrej is arrested and taken to the scaffold, where he is executed under the eyes of Morozova, forced by the wicked Vjaz'minskij to witness her son's death. The opera ends with the woman falling heart-broken to the ground, while the Oprichniks sing the Czar's praises.